

Councils of Churches Warn About Society

Councils of Churches in Texas, California and Washington State have issued strong statements warning members about the program and aims of the John Birch Society and the activities of its members.

Calling it a "dictator-run, semi-secret society," the Texas Council of Churches bases its warnings on articles in the Chicago Daily News (Jan. 30), the Louisville Courier-Journal (Feb. 19), The Canadian Record (of Texas) (March 9), and Time Magazine (Mar. 10).

Founded in Dec. 1958 by Robert Welch, a retired businessman of Belmont, Mass., the Society lists prominent conservatives on its council, whose professed goal is to fight communism in the United States by using Communist methods.

Leader Welch is on record as stating: "Milton Eisenhower is actually Dwight Eisenhower's superior and boss within the Communist Party" and, "For the former President there is only one possible word to describe his purposes and actions. That word is treason."

The charge of "Communist agent" is leveled at the late John Foster Dulles and his brother, Alen Dulles, director of the Central Intelligence Agency. One of the Society's current campaigns is for "Help Impeach Earl Warren," Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Members of its "cells," which function under many names, are said to infiltrate the PTA's and the churches, which the Society claims are filled with Communist sympathizers. The Society's policies are spelled out in a Blue Book which members are required to read. Social Security and income tax laws, among others, are called by Welch parts of a Communist plot to take over the United States.

The Texas Council's warning quotes Ben R. Ezzell, editor of the Texas Canadian Record who attended a meeting of the Society: "The methods by which Welch, through the John Birch Society, proposes to achieve his goals will, if you're an average patriotic American, raise the hair on your head. He proposes, in essence, to establish an American dictatorship, with Robert Welch as its head." Mr. Ezzell concludes with the warning: "Don't sell them short. They are headed by a man who means business. And don't join them... if you place any value on your freedom."

In Amarillo, Texas, nine ministers issued a statement on March 3 challenging retired Air Force Brigadier General WM. L. Lee to produce any evidence he has to support his charge of Communist influence in the National Council of Churches. Gen. Lee is a "voluntary coordinator" of the John Birch Society.

In its statement, the Northern California-Nevada Council of Churches declared on March 3: "The Council particularly cautions its members to beware of the 'big lie' tactics of Godless communism and other forms of tyranny, both on the 'right' and on the 'left.' We urge alertness against the tactics of those totalitarian who bore from within and attempt to manipulate sincere people so that they unwittingly further subversive ends."

A memorandum "On Dealing with Communism and Anti-Communism," by Dr. Lemuel Patterson, executive secretary of the Greater Seattle (Wash.) Council of Churches, states: "Some of us have gotten involved in trying to deal with the dangers of communism. It is a serious menace, let there be no mistake. But some are satisfied to use any tools that arouse concern in the general public. Others want to make sure that the tools we use do not advance the cause of communism, contrary to our intentions. If ever we needed rational and clear thinking in our national life, it is now!"

Nixon and Blake Warn

Former Vice President Richard M. Nixon and the Rev. Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, stated clerk of the United Presbyterian Church, USA, issued statements urging respect for Constitutional law in dealing with subversion.

In a letter to the Los Angeles Times, concerning a series of articles it ran on the John Birch Society, Mr. Nixon stated: "I can well understand how many well-

intentioned people, who are justifiably concerned about the threat which subversion groups present to our free institutions, tend to reach the conclusion that the only effective way to fight such organizations is to use the same evil methods they employ... But there could be no more dangerous fallacy. One of the most indelible lessons of human history is that those who adopt the doctrine that the end justifies the means inevitably find the means become the end." Mr. Nixon added: "What we must never forget is that one of the most cherished American ideals is that we must fight with proper methods for those things in which we believe."

In a sermon on the Ninth Commandment ("Thou shalt not bear false witness"), which he gave Mar. 19 at the Presbyterian Church of Santa Barbara (Cal.), Dr. Blake challenged the congregation "to wake up to what is happening to you under the guise of anti-communism."

Stating that the John Birch Society is spreading "false witness against the clergy and lay leaders of his church and the National Council of Churches," Dr. Blake cautioned: "Don't let your Americanism and your Presbyterianism be corrupted by those who would substitute a fuhrer principal for our free society."

He concluded his sermon: "Just as America will be saved only as she adheres to law and her constitution, so also will your church continue to be one of the strongest bulwarks for freedom in the nation and the world as she is associated in the councils of the ecumenical movement under the Lordship of Jesus Christ."

Dr. Blake is a past president of the National Council and a member of its General Board.